DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 153 388 EC 110 337

AUTHOR Mayo, Nolie L.; Lanasa, Phillip J.
TITLE Investigation of Verbal Interaction Patterns of Secondary Special Education Teachers.
PUB DATE May 78
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (56th, Kansas City, Missouri, May 2-5, 1978, Session R7)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educable Mentally Handicapped; Effective Teaching; Exceptional Child Research; Interaction Process Analysis; *Learning Disabilities; Mentally Handicapped; Observation; Secondary Education; *Special Education Teachers; Teacher Characteristics; *Teaching Styles; *Trainable Mentally Handicapped; Verbal Communication

ABSTRACT

An observational study described and compared verbal interaction in specific language and learning disability (SLD), educable mentally retarded (EMR), and trainable mentally retarded (TMR) secondary level classrooms. Trained observers used Flanders Interaction Analysis system to obtain data in 46 classes. Most teachers used a direct style with lecturing occurring about 40% of the total time. Except for questioning, indirect behaviors were little used. TMR teachers used many questions and a less direct style. Conclusions were that the lack of freedom in student responses may foster dependence and that further study is needed to determine if an increased use of an indirect style would improve learning. (Author/SBH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED153388

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Investigation of Verbal Interaction Patterns of Secondary Special Education Teachers

Nolie B. Mayo

Phillip J. Lanasa

University of Houston

Clear Lake City

2700 Bay Area Blvd.

Houston, Texas 77058

Paper presented at the fifty-sixth Annual Council for Exceptional Children Convention

Kansas City, Missouri

May 4, 1978

EC110337

ABSTRACT

An observational study described and compared verbal interaction in specific language disability (SLD), educable mentally retarded (EMR), and trainable mentally retarded (TMR) secondary level classrooms. Trained observers used Flanders Interaction Analysis system to obtain data in forty-six classes. Most teachers used a direct style with lecturing occurring about 40 per cent of the total time. Except for questioning, indirect behaviors were little used. A significant F value of 6.09 was found in an analysis of variance for a teaching style ratio. TMR teachers used many questions and a less direct style.

Conclusions were that the lack of freedom in student responses may foster dependence and that further study is needed to determine if an increased use of an indirect style would improve learning.

Talk between a teacher and a student remains an essential feature of instruction despite numerous advances in teaching technology. The teacher's verbal behavior determines, not only the content of the interaction, but also the socio-emotional climate for learning. An extensive body of research in the regular classroom focuses on two contrasting patterns of behavior. Amidon and Flanders (1971) describe teacher statements as direct or indirect according to the degree of freedom a student may exercise. "In a given situation, therefore, a teacher has a choice. He can be direct, minimizing the freedom of a student to respond or he can be indirect, maximizing the freedom of the student to respond (p.6)."

The two patterns differ in other ways as well. In the direct style the teacher exerts control over student responses by telling the student specific information, by giving specific directions of what to do or how to respond, and by offering criticism or corrections when expected results are not obtained. On the other hand, in the indirect style the teacher attempts to motivate the student to respond through questioning, encouragement and support. The direct style tends to make the student more dependent on the teacher while the indirect style fosters independence. Moreover, a number of studies suggest that learning is more likely to occur where there is warmth, where students are praised, where their ideas are accepted, and where their independence is encouraged and developed (Perkins, 1951; Flanders, 1960; Amidon and Flanders, 1961; Gardner, 1973).

Little is known about the verbal interaction and its effects in special education classes. This observational study is concerned with describing verbal interaction in special education classes. It was conducted in secondary schools in an urban school district to describe and compare verbal interaction patterns in specific language and learning disability classrooms (SLD), the educable mentally retarded classroom (EMR), and the trainable mentally retarded classroom (TMR), the three groups comprising the largest segment of secondary (7-12) special education students. Major questions asked in this study were: (1) What verbal interaction patterns occur in secondary SLD, EMR, and TMR classes?; (2) Do teachers in the three types of special education classes differ in their use of direct or indirect interaction styles?

METHOD

Forty-six special education teachers of grades seven through twelve from the Houston Independent School District participated in the study. Types of classes were represented as follows: SLD, fourteen teachers; EMR, seventeen teachers; and TMR, fifteen teachers.

Five observers were trained in the use of Flanders Interaction Analysis system which provides ten categories for coding verbal behavior (Flanders, 1960). The categories are: (1) accepts feelings, (2) praises, (3) accepts ideas, (4) questions, (5) lectures, (6) gives directions. (7) criticizes, (8) student talk-response, (9) student talk-initiation, and (10) silence or confusion. The

first four categories comprise an indirect interaction pattern or teaching style. Categories five through seven are predominately found in a direct style. Eight and nine are used to categorize student responses, and ten is used for all other responses.

Based on data obtained from two hour observations in each class, frequencies and percentages were computed for each category in the system. A ratio was computed to compare the three groups. Amidon and Flanders (1971) describe a measure of indirectness, the I/D ratio which is computed by dividing categories 1-4 by categories 5-7. A number greater than 1.0 indicates predominately indirect style. If the ratio is less than 1.0 a teacher primarily uses a direct style.

RESULTS

The direct interaction pattern is most frequently found in the three types of special education classes. Table 1 compares the percentage of total time for each type of class spent in indirect teacher talk, direct teacher talk, student talk and silence or confusion. Teachers spent from 15.3 percent to 21 percent of the time using an indirect style, but used a direct style 38 per cent to 41.9 per cent of the time.

Table 2 shows the percentage of time by type of class and category. Questioning was the most frequently used indirect behavior. The behaviors of accepting feelings, praise, and accepting ideas were used very little with percentages ranging from .4 per

TABLE 1

Comparison of SLD, EMR, and TMR Classes

For Indirect Teacher Talk, Direct Teacher Talk,

Student Talk and Silence

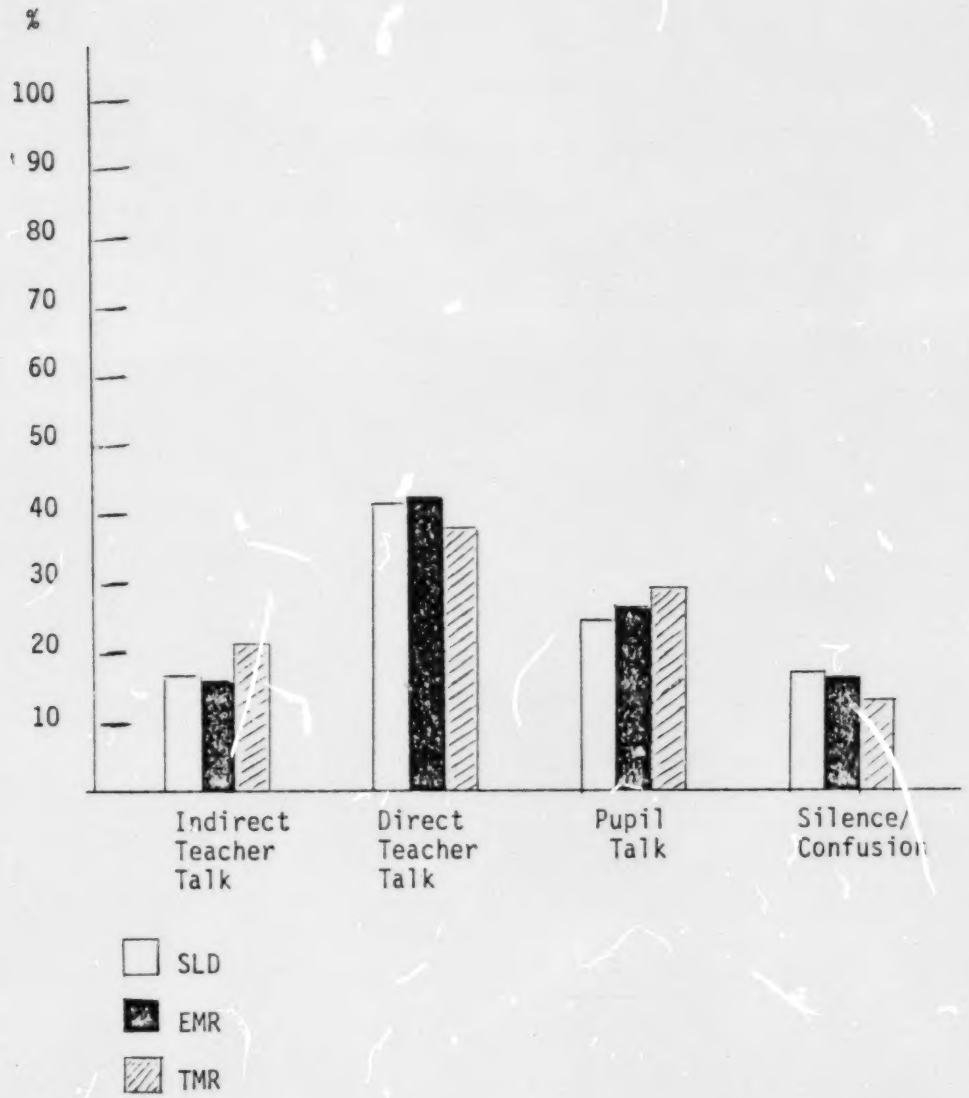

TABLE 2

Percentages of Total Verbal Interaction

For Each Category by Type

of Class

Category	Indirect				Direct			Student-Talk		Silence
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Type										
SLD	.4	2.7	1.6	11.7	28.6	9.9	3.3	14.0	10.6	17.2
		(16.5)				(41.8)		(24.6)		(17.2)
EMR	1.0	1.8	2.5	9.9	32.5	6.9	2.6	16.4	10.1	16.0
		(15.3)				(41.9)		(26.6)		(16.0)
TMR	.6	4.6	2.3	13.5	20.6	13.9	3.5	21.4	7.6	12.6
		(21.0)				(38.0)		(28.4)		(12.6)

Numbers in parenthesis are totals for combined categories: 1-4; 5-7; 8-9; 10.

cent to 4.6 per cent. In the direct categories, all teachers used lecture or giving information more than any other behavior. EMR teachers spent almost one-third, 32.5 per cent, of classtime telling information. Percentages for lecturing in SLD and TMR classes are 28.6 per cent and 20.6 per cent respectively. Much less time was spent in giving directions and very little time was spent criticizing students. As would be expected, students talked more in classes which used more indirect behaviors. The data summarized in Table 2 shows a disparity of use among categories. Lecturing, which focuses on content, was used most frequently. The most frequently used behavior in indirect categories is questioning, which is also content oriented, but the indirect categories which are aimed at motivating student responses and independence are neglected.

An analysis of variance for the I/D ratios for the three groups showed a significant difference among the three groups of special education teachers. The F value of 6.09 is significant at the .005 level.

Mean I/D ratios for the three groups were SLD, .43; EMR, .38, and TMR, .87. I/D ratios for individual TMR teachers ranged from .21 to 2.32. They varied greatly from a very direct style to a highly indirect style. This suggests that an extremely indirect style used by some individuals in this group accounts for the difference. It should be noted that the mean ratios for all three

groups is less than 1.0. Thus it can only be said that TMR teachers tended to be less direct than the other two groups.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The predominant use of a direct style in the observed special education classes indicates that teachers are defining rather exactly how students will respond. Little freedom in the variety of responses available to a student was evident. This implies that these students would be dependent on the teacher. Further, few instances of warmth, praise, acceptance, and independence, which are related to increased learning in the regular classroom, were observed. Studies are needed to assess the effects on learning of various styles. These conclusions point to several questions which need further study:

(1) Does the actual verbal behavior of special education teachers reflect their intended behavior?

(2) Does this behavior represent patterns which are consistent with current learning theory?

(3) Does the use of an indirect style lead to increased learning in special education classes as it seems to do in regular classes; or should different styles be used for the three types of classes and according to desired outcomes?

References

Amidon, Edmund J., and Flanders, Ned A. The effects of direct and indirect teacher influence on dependent-prone students learning geometry. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1961, 52, 286-291.

Amidon, Edmund J. and Flanders, Ned A. The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom. Revised edition, Association for Productive Teaching, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1971.

Flanders, Ned A. Teacher Influence, Pupil Attitudes and Achievement. United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Cooperative Research Project No. 397, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1960.

Gardner, James W. A study of the effect of pupil-teacher interaction on student achievement, (Doctoral Dissertation, McNeese State University, 1973), Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 34, Number 6, 3234A, (University Microfilms No. 73-30-237).

Perkins, H. V. Climate influences group learning. Journal of Educational Research, 1951, 45, 115-119.